

REPORT from SAIGON

—Where our money may already have installed Ho chi Minh at the airport.

by Hilaire du Berrier

PRESSURE is building up in Southeast Asia, towards an inevitable explosion. It may come tomorrow or next week or next year, and when it does the reverberation may well shake America. To put it simply, *the American taxpayer has been pouring around two million dollars a day into South Vietnam for the past three and a half years* under the artificially-maintained delusion that he is bolstering a nation, and in turn, the free world, against Communism. An admitted 64 percent of this money has gone to pay a national army of 150,000 men, a civil guard of 45,000 men, and a police force of 15,000. How much more

has been diverted to pay the vast armies of informers attached to *the half dozen security organizations oppressing the country* we shall never know.

They are paid directly by the President, Ngo dinh Diem.

No honest, informed authority can say that this sprawling, police-state machine with its interlocking networks of soldiers, civil guards, police, and paid informers, has hindered the infiltration of communists at all. What it has done is permit an unwanted dic-

Mr. du Berrier is a former associate of Ngo dinh Diem. He accompanied the Diem mission to the Big Four conference in Geneva and has had wide-ranging experience in Indo-China politics. This article advances a point of view in regard to South Viet Nam which is strikingly different from that which has been advanced by other American commentators. In the interest of free public discussion, we believe that Mr. du Berrier's interpretation of the Saigon situation should be given serious consideration by the American people. His facts give a different picture of the Southeast Asia problem.

tator to remain in power. He was imposed on a people who never wanted him. Our money and arms and the advisers who have organ-

ized his police have prevented the people, who would have been our allies, from putting him out. The first casualty has been Free Asia's faith in America's judgment. The second has been the friends we have pushed into the camp of our enemy by leaving them no alternative.

The American public itself would have prevented this, *if the American public had been told the truth*. But government agencies, supporting a man against his people rather than a nation against Communism, ran a campaign to mislead the public. A paid propaganda agency, at the American public's expense, has operated behind organizations set up by themselves as "institutions to combat Communism," but which in reality were perverted to produce articles in magazines, books, meetings and lectures to perpetuate a false picture of Ngo dinh Diem and the situation in his country. Now, when disillusionment comes, it will be the more brutal.

The cast of characters includes strange names of men in roles to which their past records certainly do not entitle them.

Kieu cong Cung was Red leader Ho chi Minh's chief of staff until shortly before the country was divided. He now directs President Ngo dinh Diem's security organization, the *Cong Dan Vu*.

Nguyen van Thuan, who was Ho chi Minh's supply and economy chief in the Saigon area, is now

head of President Diem's Psychological Warfare Section, the *Dan Van*.

General Hinh was South Vietnam's army chief-of-staff in 1954 and, in September of that year, precipitated the new president's first crisis.

Bao Dai, the former Emperor, was then known as Chief-of-State.

Tran chanh Thanh, another former Communist leader, is now Diem's information chief.

GENERAL Le van Vien, colorful leader of a private army known as the Binh Xuyen, ran South Vietnam's police and controlled the gambling center of Cholon, just outside the capitol. Describing him as a brigand and a pirate, our press has devoted more attention to the moral aspect of Le van Vien's background than to the political past of Diem's henchmen. Ignored is the fact that Le van Vien was a potential pillar in the fight against the Reds. His army was anti-Communist, profoundly Nationalist.

Colonel Le Paul, the son of Le van Vien, was captured by Diem forces and assassinated at the age of 26.

Pope Pham cong Tac, spiritual leader of the Cao Dai sect, is now living in exile in Cambodia.

General Bacut, military commander of the Hoa Hao sect, was seized while under safe conduct pledge to discuss rallying to Diem's

government, hastily "tried" and guillotined.

THESE ARE the characters of our story, no part of which is encouraging. How long can the state of affairs it describes continue? As long as the Communists wish, and no longer. *The millions of dollars we have spent in arms and aid have only suppressed our friends.* They were the people to whom we promised liberty and the right to a government of their own choosing. *Our betrayal has alienated them from us.* Each day, the man we have imposed on them makes the Reds look better.

Such is the situation in South Vietnam. It will not change for better as long as American money and arms maintain "our man" and prevent the South Vietnamese anti-Communist Nationalists from installing someone South Vietnam wants.

How do South Vietnam's neighbors feel about President Ngo dinh Diem? To a man they see him as the cancer in Southeast Asia. They reproach us for his being there. When Diem barred the Chinese from commerce in South Vietnam and told them they could not take their currency from the country, an underground flight of capital to Cambodia and Hong Kong ensued. Still more brutal retaliatory measures against the Chinese followed. Formosa was helpless to aid her nationals. It was then that Peking

agents came into the picture. The same decrees that hit the Chinese and caused them to paralyze Diem's economy hit the nationals of Laos and Cambodia residing in the country. Red China took advantage of the favorable climate in Laos and Cambodia to pour enough arms into Vietnam to set up another Red underground division. Formosa, dependent on America for her own support and protection, was forced to sit by and see her nationals in South Vietnam go under.

Chinese comprise half the population of Thailand. They control the commerce of Hong Kong, Singapore, Laos, Cambodia, and much of the Philippines. A landslide to the left in one Chinese community sets forth a chain reaction in the others. That is the reality hovering over Southeast Asia while the American public is being told that all is well.

The stubborn Diem has never been known to backtrack. His alternative to restoring in some measure the Chinese distribution system, which he could not replace with any system of his own and so provide a stopgap to save his economy, was to start a campaign to lure American investments. A veritable campaign followed, telling the public, "It is the duty of every patriotic American to use his influence to see that aid to Vietnam is maintained at the highest possible level and American investments encouraged." The same decrees that

nationalized the Chinese, it might be observed, can despoil the American investor when the time is right, or if the president's brothers and in-laws decide on a last clean-up before their ship goes down.

As long as the powerful Chinese community of South Vietnam sees the fruits of its labor appropriated by the Diem regime, that ship can go down any day. A simultaneous tie-up of neighboring economies can force the West to write off Asia.

AN EXAMPLE of the success of the *Pro Diem* campaign can be seen in Congressman Judd's eulogizing of President Diem in a booklet published in September, 1956, by the American Friends of Vietnam. No more honest and sincere friend of Free Asia exists than Dr. Judd, yet in commenting on the despair of General Collins and the French General Ely over Diem's stubborn refusal to consider the consequences of driving the only certain anti-Red forces in the country into civil war against himself, Congressman Judd was persuaded to write:

"They (the two generals) came home, wrung their hands and thought matters were hopeless. While they were out of the country, fortunately, Diem went in and cleaned things up. Since they were gone they could not stop him. General O'Daniel egged Diem on, as I understand, all the way."

The inference is that since then all has been fine. How hopeless things were and how right General Collins was can be gathered from London *Economist's* "confidential" report of January 30, 1958. The whole western area, formerly controlled by Bacut, says *Economist*, is in revolt and terrorism is increasing. "The local press reports murders of officials and administrators, but these reports are delayed by censorship. Authorities faced by factual reports reply that reports from the provinces are not available, or that the situation is quiet. In private, however, some Sûreté officials say the situation is constantly deteriorating."

Either *Economist* or the congressman is being misled. The *Economist* states that more than a million Hoa Hao sect adherents in the Can Tho-Long Xuyen area believe Bacut was a martyr and that these enjoy the passive support of between 300,000 and 400,000 Cambodians. Was it then so fortunate that General O'Daniel "egged Diem on all the way, to go in and clean things up," while General Collins was out of the country and unable to stop him?

Red China is reported to be pulling out of North Korea. Some regard the withdrawal as a propaganda trick. Vietnamese nationalists fear that when the Red upsurge takes place in Southeast Asia, Chinese armies will be sitting, grim-faced, opposite Formosa and

on the door-steps of Thailand, Laos, Cambodia, and South Vietnam. The army we have armed and trained for President Diem has been diluted by both Communist and Nationalist infiltration. No American paper reported the armored car regiment's plot to move on Saigon in February, 1957, or the executions that followed. No news showing our South Vietnam investment as other than gilt-edged is permitted to reach the American public.

It is time our public is told to consider eventualities. The Red take-over will not be by armed invasion, as envisaged by our treaties with South Vietnam. When the Peking army on the border suggests, pointedly, that "we both stay out of this," it will be too late to backtrack. The only Resistance forces in the field, to oppose a Red triumphal entry, when that day comes, will be the Hoa Hao and Cao Dai sects and the much-reviled Binh Xuyen, whom we encouraged Diem to liquidate and for three years have ignored as inconsequential or abused as outlaws.

President Diem and his family and their friends, who form the South Vietnam government, may get away or may not get away. Only "sure" presidential guard battalions under picked officers, who receive orders directly from the president, have been kept in the capitol. The airport will be the last point to fall, or the first. It is not by

accident that the top security organization, the *Cong Dan Vu*, is located at the airport, from where any getaway would start. Special powers have been delegated to the *Cong Dan Vu*, which must answer only to the president, and has a budget that is not controlled by the Minister of Finance.

THIS sinister organization is headed by none other than Communist Ho chi Minh's former staff chief, Kieu cong Cung, who joined President Diem's brother, Ngo dinh Nhu, former labor leader, before the Geneva agreement of 1954. Most of the department heads Cung has drawn around him also are former Red comrades from Central Vietnam. One of these is Nguyen van Thuan, the former Communist Economy Chief who handled the illegal piastre traffic by which Ho chi Minh supplied his army when Ho controlled Saigon. Nguyen van Thuan now directs Diem's Psychological Warfare Section, known as the *Dan Van*. It is joined to Intelligence and has the right to make arrests without warrant.

Independent of both Cung and Thuan is the Information Section under Tran chanh Thanh, former top-level Red, who brought his staff and the worst features of Vietminh police state rule with him.

A police force of special troops and an ant-hill of informers maintain the grip of these men on na-

tional thought and action. They reach into every corner of South Vietnamese life, and there is probably not a man among them to whom the most anti-McCarthy American would have given a security clearance.

UNDER ANYONE but Ngo dinh Diem, no such government would have been tolerated by the American taxpayer, at whose expense the Diem government exists. And it is incredible that after three and a half years of propaganda, very little of which bears analyzing, the sacred cow aspect of the Diem myth persists. Take the *Time* Magazine biography of President Diem published April 4, 1955. It was intended to be favorable. Describing the home-training methods of the president's father, Ngo dinh Kai, *Time* writes, "Diem took to this austerity, prayed a couple of hours every day, got up at 5 AM to study, exploding into tantrums if interrupted by his brothers or sisters." And in the same article, "He (Diem) may erupt into sudden violence. Considering someone he dislikes, he will sometimes spit across the room and snarl, 'Dirty type!'"

This is the man into whose hands we have delivered some 11 or 12 million people. When interrupted or crossed, Diem still has tantrums, and any person he dislikes is still a "dirty type." The spitter-across-the-room holds the life and death pow-

er of a dictator. To his people these tantrums have proved unbearable; to us they have proved expensive. No give and take has been possible. No compromise. The snarl has become a death sentence.

This sort of thing has not increased local enthusiasm for Diem or us. It is what our enemies exploit as "American colonialism" and to which the sincerest of our friends is hard put for an answer. Diem never had popular support in the country over which we placed him, though after the showdown with the Binh Xuyen, the private army of General Le van Vien, he did enjoy the prestige of a victor. Le van Vien controlled the gambling area of Cholon and the police. Diem drove him into exile. His 26-year-old son, Colonel Le Paul, was captured. The crisis could and should have been avoided. The Binh Xuyen army was anti-Communist. Diem hacked them to pieces for the Reds.

Diem was secure against any threat from within. The Cao Dai and the Hoa Hao were not letting him collect taxes in their areas, but the anti-Communist insurance they were providing was worth more than any loss in revenue to Diem. That was the time to broaden his government, to give the southern leaders a voice and let his people breathe. Instead, he decided to break the power of the sects, destroy every vestige of what here would be called states' rights. It was

the greatest of all the favors he did the Reds.

On the morning of April 14, 1956, Colonel Le Paul was taken from his cell in Phu-Lam prison, loaded onto a truck and driven in the direction of Rach-Cat. His body was found four miles down the road with hands still bound behind his back. Police said he had tried to escape. The truth was, the Vietnamese whispered, he was killed because Diem's hate could not touch his father. News of Le Paul's assassination reached Le van Vien in Paris and the Cao Dai Pope, Pham cong Tac, in his place of exile in Pnom Penh. It never did reach America.

A few days later the Hoa Hao sect's commander, Bacut, who had sworn not to cut his hair until his country was reunited, walked into a trap. Diem invited him to come in under truce to discuss rallying to the government, then told him, when taken, that the truce had expired. A trial was set up at which the uncle of Diem's sister-in-law presided as judge. Only one witness, Bacut's uncle, who acted as intermediary in arranging the truce, dared appear for the defense. He disappeared after testifying. Bacut was whisked to a guillotine and summarily executed. The American press, having failed to print these aspects of the Bacut case, is now at a loss to explain why the million Hoa Hao followers are in revolt to revenge Bacut's death to-

day, if there is any inclination to report the Hoa Hao action.

CERTAINLY, by the expedient of suppressing reports from Southeast Asia, it has been made to appear that our cause is gaining. But such a policy is sabotage when months and areas vital to our cause are being lost. Senator Mansfield, who has been referred to as "Diem's godfather," wrote with satisfied certainty in *Harper's Magazine*, January, 1956, "The power of both these dissident groups (the Hoa Hao and the Cao Dai) has been broken." This, repeated with the monotonous regularity of a radio commercial, has been the theme of Diem's supporters ever since.

The exact contrary is the truth. The sects and the private armies have lost their leaders, and without their leaders they have lost their feudal aspect. Now they are banded together. The Hoa Hao are still inspired by Bacut's martyrdom and the Cao Dai followers by Diem's treatment of their Pope, but the popular desire of the country to rid itself of President Ngo dinh Diem has drawn the disparate bands together and given them a united, nationalist standing.

Surrounding South Vietnam like spectators around an arena, the neighboring nations of Southeast Asia watch the struggle between the outside-imposed dictator and his people. They have no illusions about the whys or the wherefores

of the fight. Uppermost in their minds is the thought that someday this may happen to them. The graft, the communist infiltration and the merciless angers of the dictator are no secret to them, for this show is being enacted before their eyes. Yet, as they watch it, they are being subjected to the same United States Information Agency campaign for the glorification of President Diem that the American and Vietnamese publics are getting.

Granted, this senseless waste of the taxpayers' money took place under the Arthur Larson direction of USIA. Mr. George Allen has stated, since taking over the Information Agency, "My own view is that the government of Vietnam is a matter entirely for the people of Vietnam to decide without interference from any source, whether American or foreign and whether official or private." Only by dismissing every USIA employee in Southeast Asia can Mr. Allen put such a policy into practice or convince Asiatics that he means it.

That is why Asia believes Russian propaganda and not ours today. The 90 percent of ours that they have heard has been directed to selling them a tyrannous puppet whom they know only too well for what he is worth.

Also, Asia is convinced that neither Moscow nor Washington really wishes a change in Saigon. Saigon is the showwindow for American democracy in that part of the world,

but South Vietnam is the interior of the store. Ho chi Minh is satisfied with the *status quo*, because time is working for him. All he has to do is wait. The corruption and despotism of the Diem government is daily pushing the people towards him.

MEANWHILE, opposition armies under Bay Mon, General Le van Vien's former chief of staff, roam the country at will. Diem only controls the press. The people have forgotten their past grievances against the Binh Xuyen and the Hoa Hao and now love both for having fought against Ngo dinh Diem. Bacut's brother is with the Binh Xuyen, bearing a pledge of support from the million Hoa Hao worshippers of Long Xuyen. The Cao Dai Pope used to present a solid front against Ho chi Minh in the region of Tay Ninh. Now the 3,000-man force he left behind him has become a rallying point for the new *Cao Tien Hoa Binh* army against Diem. Each unit carries its own flag, whether it belongs to the sects or the Binh Xuyen or the underground opposition, and, beside it, is carried the new flag of the united army.

Each day that army is denied the right of self-determination on grounds that by opposing our man they are working against America, helps the Reds throughout South-East Asia. By now the obstacles to granting the right of self-determi-

nation have become almost unsurmountable. The government in power has driven all anti-communist leadership into exile or the underground war that has equally embittered them towards the West.

UNLESS those anti-communist Nationalist leaders are permitted to come out of prisons and back from exile, many more millions of Asiatics are going to atone in chains for our misguided meddling.

To Vietnamese, who have watched Diem's ex-Red security

chiefs arrest their own former followers for acts committed five years ago under them,—whenever one of these boys has tried to leave the Red camp and come back to his family—a strong suspicion exists. If, as they believe, under Diem's oppressive police-state system (which we are supporting) no true rallying—but only communist infiltration in the South—is possible, President Diem and his family will never have time to warm-up the plane for that last, one-way flight. Their "security chiefs" will become their jailors and stay right on in business.

Three men in New York control 80 percent of everything which appears on the TV screens, declares Miss Frieda Hennock, who for seven years was a member of the Federal Communications Commission. She told the House Committee investigating the FCC that the networks hold "life and death control over television." Such a condition of three-man control certainly strikes at the foundation of American freedom of speech. Miss Hennock should know. She saw the monopoly growing up. How many American-minded speeches and programs have been barred from the air as a result of this unwholesome condition is a subject which Congressional investigators should review.

Recently Mayor Wagner appointed the *Rev. Dr. Gardner C. Taylor* to the N. Y. City Board of Education. . . . In *April, 1957, Dr. Taylor* conducted the *funeral service of a member of the national committee of the Communist Party* in his church. (The *Concord Baptist Church of Brooklyn*) . . . In the course of the sermon, this same Dr. Taylor described the deceased (Edward E. Strong) as "*one who dreamed and worked for the new world every good person desires.*" . . . Paul Robeson, whose record is well known, sang at the service. Five members of the Communist Party were among the pallbearers. . . . This use of the *Christian Church for the burial of one of its leading members* reflects the *new line of the Communist Party*.